



City of
Hamilton
2026
Arts Awards

Shirley Elford
Emerging Artist
Commission Prize

Deadline: Friday 10 April 2026

**HAMILTON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**



Apply online:
hamilton.ca/artsawards

About the Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize

Showcase Your Work At The City Of Hamilton 2027 Arts Awards

The City of Hamilton Arts Awards program is pleased to partner with the Hamilton Community Foundation to present the Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize. Two (2) emerging artists (practicing in any discipline) will each be given a \$2,000 commission fee to create an artwork that explores contemporary themes related to Hamilton's evolving identity.

The commissions will be presented at the 2027 City of Hamilton Arts Awards Event.

The Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize recognizes artistic excellence. It is intended to support emerging artists in furthering their work and provide opportunities to promote and showcase their work.

This Prize is awarded in memory of the late Shirley Elford, a Hamilton artist celebrated for her excellence in glass work and her work giving back to the local arts community and the community at large.

2 commissions, \$2,000 per commission.

About the City of Hamilton Arts Awards

The mission of the City of Hamilton Arts Awards Program is to recognize the full breadth of achievement of our local arts community, the individual artists and organizations who are its ambassadors, and the community members who support and engage in this work throughout our community. Award recipients and the recipients of the Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize will be announced publicly at the Arts Awards event in July 2026 in conjunction with Hamilton Arts Week Festival.

Vision

The Arts Awards will serve to promote the City of Hamilton's pride in its arts community, to inspire and enhance success, to foster growth in the sector, and to develop the talent that drives this vital part of our city.

Values

The Arts Awards program will consistently promote the values of:

- Inclusivity and diversity
- A transparent and open process
- Community building and public engagement
- The core principle that the arts are central to our community's identity, economy, civic pride, and sustainability

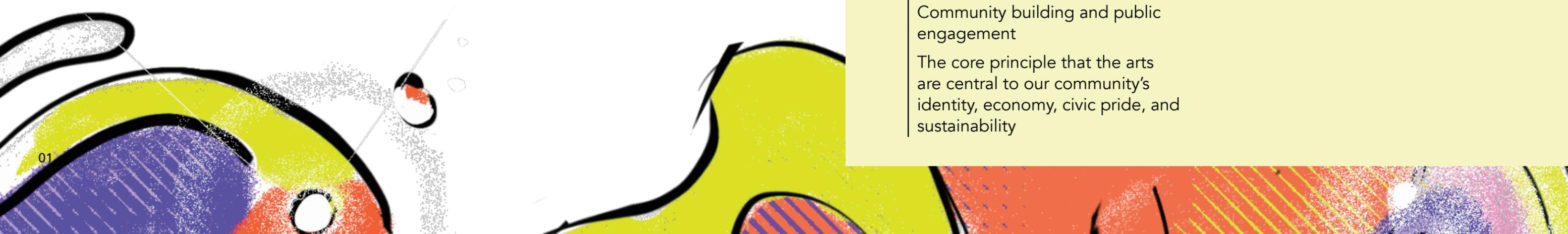
Commitment to Inclusion and Representation

The City's arts sector encompasses diverse individuals and groups who represent many demographics and intersections of lived experiences.

They include individuals and collectives at different stages in their artistic careers, working in a wide diversity of disciplinary practices across Hamilton's 15 wards.

Hamilton's municipal Arts Awards strives to represent the diversity of this sector through all aspects of the program, including:

- Composition of Arts Sector Review Panel and Award Selection Panel
- Outreach to key individuals, organizations and community groups to encourage public nominations
- Commissioning of artist programming for the Arts Awards event/celebration



Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize Details

The intention of this opportunity is to showcase contemporary, emerging art practices that are reflective of the broader Hamilton arts community and the city's evolving identity. The selected artists will be announced at the 2026 City of Hamilton Arts Awards and the commissioned artwork will be showcased at the 2027 City of Hamilton Arts Awards event.

This event typically attracts hundreds of artists and community members.

There will be a variety of options to present artwork ranging from on-stage productions (e.g., performances of music, theatre, dance, spoken word, etc.) to installations and performances (e.g., sculpture, performance art, exhibition/displays, etc.) to screen-based presentations (e.g., short film, new media, etc.). This opportunity is open to artists practicing in all mediums however the commissioned work must be in a format that can be presented at a live event.

Commissioned artwork will be showcased at the 2027 City of Hamilton Arts Awards ceremony.

Additional details:

The artwork must be presented at the 2027 City of Hamilton Arts Awards Event (date TBD).

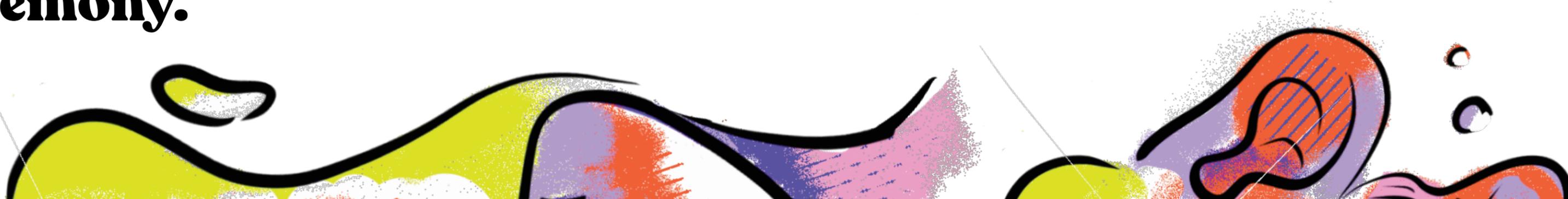
Due to time limitations at the event, if the artwork is a full-length play, album, film, or other longer work, the commissioned artist may be asked to select an excerpt for presentation.

The commission fee is \$2,000. This fee includes the recipient's artist fee and all costs related to the creation/production of the artwork.

The Arts Awards program will provide support and resources to assist with the public presentation of the work (e.g. equipment rental, audio/visual equipment, artist fees for performers other than the commission recipient, staffing to assist with installation, etc.). A budget of approximately \$500 per commission has been allocated for costs related to the presentation of the artwork.

The commissioned artists will retain all moral rights and copyright to the artwork. As part of the terms of the commission, the City will license the artworks for the promotion of and display at the Arts Awards event; the artist will take possession of the work following the event.

The commissioned artists will be expected to prepare an initial project proposal in early 2027 for feedback and to provide a more detailed proposal once additional event details and location are confirmed. The commission fee will be paid subject to the approval of the project proposal by the Director of Tourism and Culture, City of Hamilton or their designate.



Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Applicants

Individual artist who is 18 years of age or older or an artistic collective (e.g., band, duo, troupe, collaborative, etc.) whose members are 18 years of age or older. Note, performers under the age of 18 years are permitted provided the project leaders/lead applicants are 18 years or older.

Artist or the majority of collective members (minimum 75%) have been practicing professionally for **less than five years.**

Current resident of Hamilton (including Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Stoney Creek, Waterdown), Six Nations of the Grand River or Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation consecutively for the past two years or longer at the time of submission.

Artistic collectives are eligible for nomination provided that a minimum of 75% of the collective has lived in Hamilton, Six Nations of the Grand River or Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation consecutively for the past two years or longer.

Must be a Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident (Landed Immigrant) or have an application pending for Permanent Residency.

May be self-taught or have art training through formal education, apprenticeship, or with a mentor or elder.

Ineligible Applicants

Full-time students are not eligible (high school or post-secondary students in an art program).

Previous Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize recipients are not eligible to apply.

Previous City of Hamilton Arts Awards recipients are not eligible to apply, with the exception of Emerging Artist award recipients.

Selection Process & Criteria

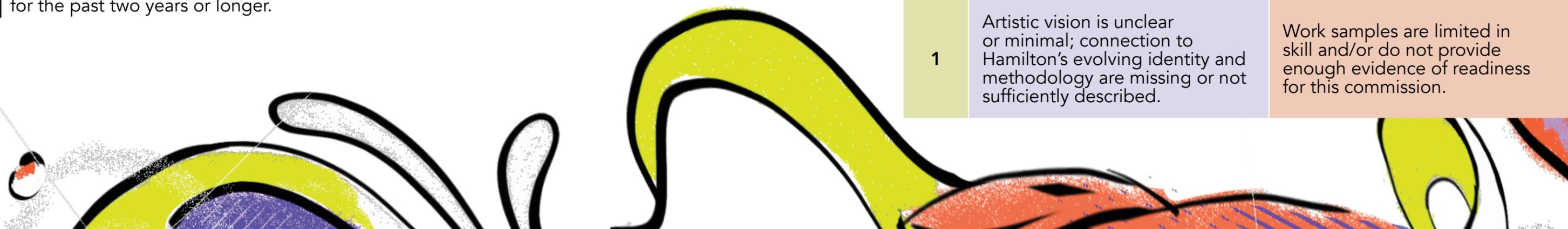
Selection Panel

An independent panel composed of emerging artists and arts professionals representing a variety of disciplines will evaluate the applications.

Scoring

The selection panelists will select the strongest application based on established scoring criteria and subsequent selection panel deliberation. Nominations must achieve a minimum benchmark score to be eligible for the award. If the benchmark is not met, the selection panel reserves the right to not select a winner.

| Score | Artistic/Creative Vision (/4) | Examples of Work (/4) |
|-------|--|---|
| 4 | Clear, specific artistic vision with strong, evident connection to Hamilton's evolving identity; methodology suggests a credible direction for developing commission for live event context. | Work samples demonstrate a high level of skill and ambition, showing a consistent artistic practice. |
| 3 | Artistic vision is clear and connected to Hamilton's evolving identity; methodology indicates a plausible direction, though the approach or intended inquiry remain broad. | Work samples demonstrate solid skill and a developing artistic practice with clear potential. |
| 2 | Artistic vision is general or under-defined; connection to Hamilton's evolving identity and/or methodology is present but vague, making the direction hard to assess at this stage. | Work samples demonstrate some skill, but consistency, resolution, or artistic development is limited. |
| 1 | Artistic vision is unclear or minimal; connection to Hamilton's evolving identity and methodology are missing or not sufficiently described. | Work samples are limited in skill and/or do not provide enough evidence of readiness for this commission. |



Application Form

Applications (including this form) can be submitted online by visiting hamilton.ca/artsawards. If you wish to submit your application by mail, please print and fill out this form (see contact information in **Application Instructions**).

A. Artist Information

Name *(first, last)*

Organization *(if applicable)*

This nominee meets the eligibility criteria *(see page 3)*.

Yes Not Sure

Please fill in this nominee information to the best of your ability:

Phone Number

Email

Website

Instagram

X *(formerly Twitter)*

Facebook

What is your primary artistic discipline? Select a maximum of two (2).

- Arts Management
- Arts Education & Community Arts
- Fine Craft
- Media Arts
- Music
- Theatre
- Visual Arts
- Dance & Performing Arts
- Writing
- Other *(please provide details)*

B. Artist Statement & Approach

Statement: 750 words maximum

An artwork proposal is not required at this time. Please submit a brief statement outlining the philosophy, inspiration, and methodology behind your work (e.g., themes, inspiration, techniques, materials). Indicate how you would approach this commission, including areas of inquiry related to Hamilton’s evolving identity that you plan to explore. The successful artists will work with program staff to develop a complete proposal once details of the 2027 Arts Awards event are finalized (event format, location, etc.). This proposal will be subject to approval by the Director of Tourism and Culture, City of Hamilton, or their designate, to ensure that it is in keeping with the Artist Statement & Approach as awarded and meets generally accepted community standards for display in public.

Artist Biography: 50 words maximum

Please submit a brief biography that summarizes your career as an artist/arts worker. The biography should be written in the third person as it may be used for promotional purposes (website, social media, screen presentation, etc.). Please see the example below:

“[Artist] is an established textile and fibre artist based in Hamilton, Ontario. Their artistic process involves hand-dyeing fabric, embroidery, and quilting large sculptural wall hangings. Their work uses colours, imagery, and patterns that reflect bodies of water and land formations from natural landscapes across Canada.”

C. Examples of Previous Work

Professional CV: Please submit a professional curriculum vitae or resume. This can include (but is not limited to): education and professional development, exhibitions, performances or publications, awards, professional recognition, professional associations or memberships, etc.

Artwork Samples: Please submit five (5) examples of your previous work. This can include any combination of the following materials:

Images: All images must be in JPEG format at a maximum of 1024 X 728 pixels and 300 dpi.

Audio/Video: Audio/video cued to appropriate time. Links to online content (e.g., YouTube, Bandcamp, etc.) may also be provided. Three (3) minutes per sample maximum.

Writing: Typed manuscript pages or photocopied selections from books, periodicals, etc. Please do not submit original books, periodicals, etc. Three (3) pages per sample maximum.

Project Report: A written description outlining key details of a recent project/program that the applicant played a key role in implementing. 500 words maximum.

Media Clips: News articles, reviews, interviews, videos, etc. that profile the applicant.

Documentation List: Please include relevant details relating to the Artwork Samples you provided in a list format (title, date, location, dimensions, materials, production credits, etc.)

Application Instructions

Applications are due on or before Friday 10 April 2026 and can be submitted by the following methods:

Online

Digital submissions will be accepted until 11:59PM EST at hamilton.ca/artsawards

Mail or Drop Off to Reception

Attn: City of Hamilton Arts Awards
Visitor Experience Centre
28 James Street North,
Hamilton Ontario L8R 2K1

Hard copy submissions will be accepted until 4:00PM EST.

Hours: Tues-Sat 10AM to 4PM
Closed: Sundays, Mondays and all statutory holidays.

If you are submitting a hard copy application, please submit one copy of all written materials on letter-sized paper (8 ½ X 11”).

Questions? Contact Us

Public Art and Placemaking,
Tourism and Culture Division
905-546-2424 ext. 7612
artsawards@hamilton.ca
Facebook: [CityofHamiltonArtsAwards](https://www.facebook.com/CityofHamiltonArtsAwards)
X (formerly Twitter): [@HamArtsAwards](https://twitter.com/HamArtsAwards)
Instagram: [@hamartsawards](https://www.instagram.com/hamartsawards)

Items will be scanned and input into the online application system. Support materials may be submitted on CD/DVD or USB key (as required). Incomplete applications, applications received after the deadline, and emailed, faxed, and post-dated submissions will not be accepted.

Terms of Application

All application materials submitted to the City of Hamilton Arts Awards program must be true and accurate. Falsified information will result in disqualification from the Arts Awards process. Phone numbers, emails, and mailing addresses will not be made public as part of the Arts Awards program.

All other content submitted as part of the Shirley Elford Emerging Artist Commission Prize processes including but not limited to applicant name(s), website and social media information (where applicable), and Application Information including Artist Statement, Biography, and Examples of Previous Work (hereinafter referred to as “personal information”), may be used on the internet, in print publications, or in other methods of communication (whether verbal or written) for the purpose of organizing and administering the Arts Awards program, including evaluating the nominations and communicating with awards recipients, and for the purpose of promoting the Arts Awards program. Personal information of successful applicants will be used to promote future Arts Awards programs.

Personal information collected on the application form, or as part of the application process, is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25 s.227 (b).

Information collected is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56. By providing your email address, you are consenting to receive emails from the City of Hamilton and/or their agents/contractors for information provision purposes. Information collected for this initiative may be stored on servers located in Canada and the United States and may be subject to Canadian and/or American laws.

Questions about the collection of personal information and/or withdrawal of consent to the collection, use or disclosure of this personal information by providing written notice—in which case the application will no longer be eligible for consideration—prior to the application closing date of Friday 10 April 2026 at 11:59PM EST to:

Manager, Public Art and Placemaking,
Tourism and Culture Division
City of Hamilton
P.O. Box 2040
Hamilton, ON, L8P 4Y5
Telephone 905-546-2424, ext. 6281

